

U.S. STUDENT VISAS: ADVICE AND INFORMATION

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The U.S. Embassy welcomes students from Bangladesh who aim to pursue higher education at American institutions. We welcome undergraduate students, and especially those who have gained admission to Masters and PhD programs. In addition to qualifying for admission to an academic program, students must also qualify for a U.S. student visa. Students are encouraged to visit the American Center in Banani for group and individual counseling, before applying for a student visa. (See contact information below.)

Q. What do I need to do to qualify for a student visa?

Ans. Many factors are taken into consideration to assess if an applicant is qualified for a U.S. student visa. First, students must be accepted to a reputable U.S. educational institution, reflected by an I-20 form from the school you will attend. Secondly, the applicant must demonstrate that they will have sufficient resources to pay for the proposed course of education. Applicant must also demonstrate strong English fluency. Finally, the applicant will be assessed for the seriousness of their educational purpose. In assessing the applicant, the consular officer will consider several factors, include the educational program applied for, prior educational experiences and qualifications, and the student's stated motives.

Q. Currently I am enrolled in a PhD program in the US, and I am newly married. When my wife applied for a visa to accompany me to the US, she was denied. Why did this happen?

Ans. Applicants for a student visas and also the spouses of students must independently demonstrate strong linkages to their country of origin, and an intention to return to their country after their studies are completed in the U.S. This legal requirement is often very difficult for students to meet; sometimes it is even harder for the spouses of students. All U.S.

student visa holders should be careful when getting married – there is no guarantee that a husband or wife will be able to join the student visa holder in the U.S.

Q. *Last year, my friend was accepted to a U.S. college, and was conditionally approved for a visa. However, he lost his place when additional processing by the Embassy took one month to complete and he could not start the program on time. What can I do to avoid this problem?*

Ans. To address the problem you raised, the US government has invested one million dollars in automating the system for administrative processing. New software has converted an old paper-based system to being completely electronic. We are also prioritizing student applications: we have extended the period of time during which students can apply for visas to 120 days before the start of their studies, to allow extra time for any needed additional processing. We have made sure that students and exchange visitors around the world receive priority scheduling for visa appointments and that their applications are processed promptly. In Dhaka, student visa applicants receive appointments within two workdays; after the interview, issuances take generally no more than three weeks.

Current statistics reveal the strength of the United States' commitment to welcoming international students and scholars. In 2006, the Department of State issued more than 590,000 visas for international academic and vocational students and exchange visitors to study or conduct research in the United States – a historic record. This figure is 14% higher than last year, and more than 5% above the previous high in 2001. We welcome students from around the world, for they will be the next generation of world leaders: former presidents of France, Indonesia, and Mexico; the king of Jordan; the UN Secretary General; and President Iajuddin Ahmed of Bangladesh, to name just a few, all studied in the United States.

[Group and individual counseling sessions regarding studying in the U.S. is available at the American Center: House #110, Road #27, Banani; phone: 883-7150 through 7153; email: DhakaPA@state.gov]

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***Ask the Consul** is a series of periodic articles discussing U.S. Visas.

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Note: *A Bangla translation of this article is also available from the American Center. If you are interested in the translation, please call the American Center Press Section (Tel: 8837150-4, Fax: 9885688; e-mail: DhakaPA@state.gov; Website: [http:// dhaka.usembassy.gov](http://dhaka.usembassy.gov)*